



City of Seattle

Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board



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Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn
Seattle City Councilmember Sally Bagshaw
Seattle City Councilmember Richard Conlin
Seattle City Councilmember Mike O'Brien
Seattle City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen

Dear Mayor McGinn and Councilmembers Bagshaw, Conlin, O'Brien, and Rasmussen:

Thank you for convening the Road Safety Summit. The recent deaths of pedestrians, bicycle riders and drivers were tragic and unnecessary and a reminder that the consequences of unsafe conditions and behavior are grave. The questions posed as part of the Summit started an important discussion in our city about how we can improve the safety of our roads for all users through education, enforcement, engineering and empathy.

Below, please find the comments of the Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board (SBAB) in response to the three questions posed during the Road Safety Summit process. SBAB's comments are organized as responses to each question.

What do you think are the highest priority safety problems to solve on Seattle roads?

- **Speeding vehicles and lack of enforcement.** Research shows that slower speeds save lives, yet many of our streets feel like highways and people drive accordingly. Greater enforcement of speeding could help to make our roads safer for all users.
- **Distracted road users.** Road users who are inattentive or distracted (talking on cell phones, texting, listening to headphones) are dangerous to others and yet this behavior is pervasive on our streets and highways. Enforcement and education could help put an end to this dangerous activity.
- **Inconsistent infrastructure and pavement markings.** Bicycle infrastructure in Seattle is often inconsistent, resulting in areas on the road where cars drivers and bicycle riders must cross paths and negotiate with each other, often without knowing where they are supposed to be or what they are supposed to do.
- **Inattention and failure to obey traffic laws by all users.** Car drivers, just like bicycle riders, can become distracted while driving and will often make a mistake or fail to obey a rule of the road due to inattention. SBAB encourages more enforcement and penalties for bicycle riders and car drivers who do not obey traffic laws.
- **Poor road surfaces.** Many of our city streets are in disrepair and cause hazardous conditions for bicycle riders. Vehicles and bicycle riders trying to avoid potholes, glass, and road debris "swerve" to avoid them and thus accidents occur. And even though SDOT has a maintenance hotline, not everyone knows about it or knows how to call in to have these problems resolved.

The Seattle Bicycle Advisory Board shall advise the City Council, the Mayor, and all departments and offices of the city on matters related to bicycling, and the impacts which actions by the city may have upon bicycling; and shall have opportunity to contribute to all aspects of the city's planning processes insofar as they relate to bicycling.

-City Council
Resolution 25534

- **Lack of separated facilities.** There are not enough separated facilities that protect bicycle riders from automobile traffic. Infrastructure like cycle tracks provide a physical buffer between cars and non-motorized modes of travel.
- **Tension or a perception of tension.** There appears to be some tension building lately between car drivers and bicycle riders. This may be a false perception created by the local media, but the “war on cars” rhetoric does not help increase safety for anybody.

What do you think are the most important things to do to make Seattle roads safer?

- **Launch a public service message campaign(s).** This outreach should include driver education courses, high schools, senior groups, automobile clubs, bike clubs, and pedestrian groups, along with general outreach to the public as a whole and may include the following:
 - Help educate all users about infrastructure issues, such as what sharrows mean, when and how bicycles should be allowed on sidewalks, etc.
 - Focus on how drivers, pedestrians, and bicycle riders should behave on the road together.
 - Partner with non-governmental agencies to create messages for *all* road users that are consistently branded and easy to recognize (e.g., “look out for everyone”, “it takes a village”, “heads up, eyes up”). The public needs to adopt the shift.
- **Design and build safer facilities.** This may include the following:
 - Adopt the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide: <http://nacto.org/cities-for-cycling/design-guide/>
 - Increase the number of separated facilities built for bicycle riders (i.e., cycle tracks).
 - Design and build a network of slow-speed, low-volume streets for non-motorized users (i.e., neighborhood greenways).
 - Design intersections so that they are safer for bicycle riders (tighter turning radii for vehicles, restrict right turns on red where appropriate, push back on-street parking near intersections to increase visibility) and update outdated intersection designs.
 - Improve road surfaces, especially before and through intersections where bicycle riders need to be looking up and around.
 - Focus road painting efforts on high-value facilities such as roadway rechannelizations, buffered bike lanes, standard bike lanes, and neighborhood greenways.
 - Bicycle and pedestrian improvements are underfunded in the transportation budget as a proportion of their respective modal shares. If we hope to improve safety for all modes of travel, we need more equal funding allocation in the transportation budget.
- **Update the Bicycle Master Plan.** The 2012 update should work in conjunction with and complement the Pedestrian Master Plan, Transit Master Plan, and upcoming Freight Master Plan.
- **Increase enforcement.** More enforcement of traffic laws for all users, including bicycle riders and car drivers.
- **Support a state-wide policy shift.** Support continued policy changes (in addition to the recent inclusion of RCW 46.83.090) at the state level that require bicycle and pedestrian safety elements in driver education classes, questions that relate to bicycle and pedestrian safety on the written driver’s test, and more frequent testing of a person’s ability to drive when renewing a driver’s license or when attending traffic school to remove or reduce a moving violation ticket.

We often talk about what government can do to promote safety. What are the ways that non-governmental groups and individuals can promote safety?

- **Build partnerships.** Partner with government agencies for marketing a paradigm shift to the public through informational, education, and social media campaigns.
- **Re-frame the conversation.** Change the conversation so that we stop pitting roadway users against each other. Many bicycle riders also drive, walk and take transit. Safer roads benefit everyone. An example would be to re-frame “road diets” so that the safety of all users – bicycle riders, pedestrians, and drivers alike – is brought to the forefront in discussions about roadway engineering and design improvements.
- **Encourage mutual respect.** Remind the public that one more person on a bicycle, walking, or taking transit means that there is one less car on the road to create traffic for other drivers. We need to keep in mind that we are all in this together and need to treat each other with respect on our roads.

SBAB thanks you for the opportunity to weigh in on this conversation at such a critical time for roadway safety in Seattle. Please let us know if we can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Blake Trask
Chair, SBAB



Max Hepp-Buchanan
Vice Chair, SBAB

Cc: Rebecca Deehr, Mayor's Office